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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 3011
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1310
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3351
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2737
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

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SUBJECT: KYRGYZ FOREIGN MINISTER CONSIDERS SUSPICIOUS DEATH
OF SADYRKULOV A MURDER

REF: BISHKEK 226 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) On the margins of Ambassador's March 25 meeting with Foreign Minister Sarbayev to discuss the Millennium Challenge Threshold Country Program (septel), Ambassador asked Sarbayev what he thought about the suspicious death of former Presidential Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov (reftels). Ambassador noted that the incident had disturbed many people in Washington. Sarbayev replied, with apparent sincerity, that it was a genuine tragedy. He knew Sadyrkulov well, and had worked with him when the latter was Ambassador to Iran. Gesturing to his cell phone, Sarbayev said he had pictures of himself and Sadyrkulov at the Beijing Olympics (when Sarbayev was Kyrgyz Ambassador to China). He added that President Bakiyev is deeply shaken by the death of a man he considered a close friend, and had ordered Minister of Internal Affairs Kongantiyev to get to the bottom of this.

¶2. (C) Sarbayev added that Sadyrkulov was a wealthy man, and that it was well known that he had business interests in Iran (even while he was Ambassador there) and in Kazakhstan. Sarbayev said he suspected one of Sadyrkulov's business interests in those countries had turned against him, and rhetorically asked why the government would want to murder him? Everyone knew he had been talking with the opposition, but he was just "flirting" with them, and the government was going to offer him another high-level job in a few weeks. This was normal with Kyrgyz officials who leave government.

¶3. (C) "If the government was prepared to kill Sadyrkulov, it would have already killed (opposition leaders) Tekebayev and Beknazarov, who are much more offensive in their talk about the President. Sadyrkulov never criticized him publicly. But they're (Tekebayev and Beknazarov) still alive and walking around. Maybe the opposition did it, to make the government look bad," the Foreign Minister speculated. The Ambassador clarified -- "So you do consider it to have been a murder? Sarbayev replied: "Yes, but in all honesty, I can't imagine who would do such a thing."

¶4. (C) Comment: The official government line is that

Sadyrkulov died in a "traffic accident" and the investigation into the incident is limited to that scenario only. However, it is widely believed that Sadyrkulov was assassinated and then his body burned in a crudely staged accident designed to cover up the murder. Rumors are circulating widely that the gas tanks of both cars were intact and that the coroner's examination showed that at least one, if not all three, of the passengers in the car were dead before they were burned. Most rumors suggest President Bakiyev's brother Janysh, who is head of the Presidential Security Service, was behind the killing. Sarbayev's private acknowledgment to the Ambassador that it was likely a murder is the most senior such admission we have heard.

GFOELLER